

Washington State Department of Natural Resources

Volunteer Fire Assistance

2021 Phase 2 Grant Program Requirements

Introduction

The **Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA)** program is funded through the US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (USFS). The objective of the VFA program is to improve the capacity and capability of rural and volunteer fire protection districts that protect rural communities and play a substantial cooperative role in the suppression of wildland fires within or near federally managed lands.

The Phase 2 Grant Program is available to all Washington State fire districts/fire departments that meet the eligibility requirements listed below.

Available Funding

- The maximum grant award per fire district/fire department is **\$12,000**.
- Fire districts/fire departments may only submit one application.
- **Match requirement** for all eligible projects within the Volunteer Fire Assistance Program is 50% of project cost (one dollar of eligible match for each grant dollar expended).

Application Submittal

- The application period opens October 16, 2020.
- Application is available on the DNR [Fire District Assistance](#) webpage.
- Applications must be received by DNR no later than December 13, 2020.
- Applications must be filled out completely, signed by an authorized fire district/fire department representative, and submitted by one of the following methods:
 - Email: fepp_assist@dnr.wa.gov (attach a scanned copy of signed application)
 - Mail: Wildfire Division
ATTN: Phase 2 Grant Applications
Washington State Department of Natural Resources
1111 Washington Street SE
Olympia, WA 98504
- Hand Delivery to the address above.

Grant Award and Term

- Grant funding is intended to be awarded to successful applicants by February 15, 2021.
- Projects must be completed and all reimbursement requests received by DNR no later than close of business March 15, 2022 except for certain cases involving conversion of equipment acquired through the Firefighter Property program (see Firefighter Property Conversion/Refurbishment under Project Eligibility below).
- Extensions to the grant term may be allowed at the sole discretion of DNR.
- Properly documented project costs incurred after September 1, 2020 are eligible for reimbursement.
- Properly documented match incurred as part of the project and after September 1, 2020 is eligible.

Eligibility

Fire District/Fire Department Eligibility

Fire districts/fire departments in Washington State that:

- Respond to wildland fire on private, state, or federal lands, and
- Provide service to:
 - a rural area or a rural community with a population of 10,000 or less, or
 - a community with a population greater than 10,000 that includes service to a rural community of 10,000 or less (funding must be used to benefit the rural community)
 - grant funds must benefit the rural area or rural community
- District/Department has a 70% volunteer firefighter membership or greater. As an example, for a fire district with a total of 30 firefighters (counting both paid and volunteer), 21 must be volunteers.

Project Eligibility

The following projects are eligible:

- **Firefighter Property Conversion/Refurbishment** – Includes funding for transport, conversion and/or refurbishment of vehicles obtained through the Firefighter Property Program in support of wildfire suppression. *Note: The Firefighter Property program requires equipment to be in-service within one year of acquisition. Applicants awarded funding for Firefighter Property conversions must still meet the one-year in-service requirement of the Firefighter Property program (i.e. the March 15, 2021 grant deadline does not supersede or extend Firefighter Property in-service date requirements).*
- **Non-Firefighter Property Conversion/Refurbishment** – Includes funding for purchase, conversion and/or refurbishment of vehicles to be utilized in support of wildfire suppression.
- **Fire Equipment** – Equipment suitable for wildland fire use. Includes portable pumps, water tanks (e.g. porta tanks), chainsaws. Also includes generators (e.g. backup power at fire stations). PPE and other equipment offered through Phase 1 is **not eligible** with the exception of hand tools, hose, hose fittings, and radios (for radios see “communications”).
- **Communications** – Includes the development of single or multi district communications systems, radios (vehicle and hand held), base stations, and repeaters.
- **Training** – Includes the development and implementation of programs designed for training in grass or wildland fire suppression, including instructors, facility rental and materials.
- **Fire Prevention** – Includes the development and implementation of fire prevention education programs, including Firewise workshops or prevention planning, including GIS planning projects.
- **Dry Hydrant** – Includes planning, construction and operational use of a dry hydrant system.

Ineligible Projects

The following are not eligible for funding:

- Major expenditures such as building construction
- Land acquisition or building repairs
- Rural Emergency Medical Service programs
- Water line construction and hydrants
- Structural fire engines, ladder trucks, and structure PPE
- Wellness programs

Prioritization

DNR will consider the following when prioritizing grant applications for funding. Additional criteria may also be utilized:

- Fire district/fire department protection includes communities within priority areas identified in the Statewide Forest Action Plan
- Mutual aid response agreements with DNR or federal agencies
- Past DNR grant awards. Recipients of a Phase 2 grant last year may apply, but will only be considered for funding after all other applicants have been funded.

- Project type
- Volunteer firefighter membership
- Fire district/fire department fire operating budget
 - *Defined as budgeted allocations for wildland and structural firefighting. EMS services, other grant dollars, capital outlays and construction should not be included*
- Wildland fire response call volume
 - *Does not include structural, medical, or rescue*

Federal Grant Equipment Purchases

Fire districts/fire departments receiving Volunteer Fire Assistance funding are, at a minimum, required to maintain equipment accountability records for equipment items purchased having a value of \$5,000 or greater. Such items must be identified as property acquired under the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act and Federal approval secured prior to future disposition. Fire districts/fire departments must comply with Federal regulations relating to equipment and supplies acquired by state and local governments ([§200.313 Equipment](#)).

Grants awarded for purchase of equipment with a value of \$5,000 or greater may require the fire district/fire department to complete an equipment justification and certification form providing details of the purchase (i.e. make, model, etc.), and with DNR assistance obtain USFS approval prior to actual acquisition. As an example, if a project intends to purchase equipment with grant funds, and the specifics of the equipment are not known at the time of grant application submittal or award, the district will need to provide equipment specific information for approval prior to actual purchase.

Other Requirements

- **Reimbursable grant** – the fire district/fire department must apply to DNR for reimbursement of eligible costs. Requests for reimbursement must be submitted on DNR approved forms and include supporting documentation providing evidence of incurred costs, fire district/fire department payment of costs and required match contribution. All properly documented project costs incurred after September 1, 2020 are eligible for reimbursement.
- **Eligible match** may be actual cash, donated materials or in-kind labor. All matching funds require documentation and required match must be included with any grant reimbursement request. Only match incurred as part of the project after September 1, 2020 is eligible. In-kind labor documentation must include laborer's name, dates and hours of work, and type of work performed. Donation documentation must identify what is donated, value of donation, name of donor and be signed by the donor. *Other federal grant funding is not eligible for meeting this grant's required match.*
- **In-kind labor rate** is \$25 per hour.
- **Project modifications** must have prior written approval by DNR, and in no case will DNR approve additional funding to complete the project.
- **Unused grant funds** cannot be transferred to other non-funded projects, agencies, or departments.